

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 241644Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3315

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 2176

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, ET, US

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER'S COMMENTS ON URGENCY OF RECENT  
AMMUNITION REQUEST

1. SUMMARY. FOREIGN MINISTER KIFLE WODAJO CALLED ME IN AFTER-  
NOON FEBRUARY 24 TO STRESS NEED FOR AN URGENT REPLY TO THE EPMG'S  
RECENT AMMUNITION RESUPPLY REQUEST. HE FEARS THAT OPPOSITION TO  
THE REQUEST FROM DIFFERENT QUARTERS WILL BUILD UP IF A DECISION  
ON THE MATTER IS DELAYED. THE FOREIGN MINISTER ALSO REITERATED  
THE GREAT CONCERN OF THE EPMG REGARDING RECENT PUBLICITY CONCERN-  
ING THE AMMUNITION RESUPPLY REQUEST AND INDICATED THAT IT HAS  
CREATED "MISUNDERSTANDINGS" IN THE DIRG. END SUMMARY.

2. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID HE WAS CONCERNED BY THE LACK OF A  
DECISION TO DATE ON THE EPMG'S AMMUNITION RESUPPLY REQUEST. HE  
HAD BEEN TOLD THAT THE SECRETARY HAD APPROVED THE REQUEST IN  
PRINCIPLE EVEN BEFORE DEPARTING ON HIS MIDDLE EAST TRIP AND HE  
THEREFORE FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND THE DELAY IN COMMUNI-  
CATING A DECISION WITH REGARD TO THE DETAILED LIST SUBSEQUENTLY  
SUBMITTED BY THE EPMG. HE SAID THAT SOME OF THE MILITARY IN  
ADDIS HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT THE EMBASSY AND MAAG HAD BEEN  
"DRAGGING THEIR FEET" ON THE ISSUE. IN ANY CASE, ANY FURTHER  
DELAY WOULD BE A MATTER OF GRAVE CONCERN, PARTICULARLY SINCE  
THE REQUEST WAS NOW IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN. THE ELF AND THE SYRIANS  
ARE ENDEAVORING TO BUILD UP OPPOSITION TO THE REQUEST AND CERTAIN  
ELEMENTS IN CONGRESS MAY BEGIN TO EXERT PRESSURE ON THE ISSUE.  
IT IS ESSENTIAL, HE SAID, TO "PREEMPT" SUCH MOVES BY MAKING AN  
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AFFIRMATIVE DECISION AND PRESENTING ALL CONCERNED WITH A "FAIT

ACCOMPLI".

3. IN RESPONSE I NOTED FIRST THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO FOOT DRAGGING ON THE QUESTION BY MAAG AND THE EMBASSY. MAAG HAD IN FACT RAISED THE EPMG'S REQUEST WITH THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE BEFORE THE MOD HAD RAISED IT WITH MAAG, AND HAD THEN FOUND THAT THE MOD DID NOT HAVE ITS LIST READY. MOD LATER PRESENTED ITS LIST BUT THEN CAME ACROSS WITH TWO REVISIONS OF IT IN THE NEXT TWO DAYS. BOTH MAAG AND THE EMBASSY HAD THEN WORKED UNTIL 1/30 A.M. TO SEND OUT THE FINAL LISTING. IN ANY CASE, I FULLY UNDERSTOOD THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S CONCERN FOR RAPID ACTION ON THIS MATTER AND WOULD IMMEDIATELY INFORM WASHINGTON THEREOF. I KNEW FROM MESSAGES RECEIVED HERE THAT THE MATTER IS CURRENTLY RECEIVING TOP-LEVEL CONSIDERATION IN WASHINGTON.

4. AT THE OUTSET OF OUR CONVERSATION MINISTER KIFLE HAD BEGUN BY STRESSING THE GREAT CONCERN OF THE EPMG REGARDING THE PUBLICITY WHICH HAS COME OUT REGARDING THE AMMUNITION RESUPPLY REQUEST. HE FELT THAT THIS PUBLICITY HAD BEEN VERY HARMFUL TO ETHIOPIAN INTERESTS AND SAID IT HAD CREATED "MISUNDERSTANDINGS" IN THE DIRG REGARDING US INTENTIONS, MISUNDERSTANDINGS WHICH HE WAS ATTEMPTING TO ALLAY. A CAREFUL INVESTIGATION HAD BEEN CONDUCTED AND IT HAD BEEN DETERMINED THAT THE LEAK HAD NOT COME FROM THE ETHIOPIAN SIDE. ONLY FOUR ETHIOPIANS HAD IN FACT BEEN FAMILIAR WITH THE DETAILS OF THE AMMUNITION REQUEST.

5. I REPLIED THAT THE EMBASSY HAD ALSO BEEN SHOCKED BY THE LEAK AND HAD CONSIDERED IT MOST UNFORTUNATE. I HAD FIRST LEARNED OF THE MATTER WHEN THE AP REPRESENTATIVE HERE, ANDY TORCHIA, HAD CALLED ME ON FEBRUARY 17 AND ASKED ME TO COMMENT ON A REPORT "FROM AN ETHIOPIAN SOURCE" THAT ETHIOPIA HAD JUST REQUESTED 25 MILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF AMMUNITION FROM THE USG. I HAD REFUSED TO COMMENT ON THIS STORY AND HAD REPEATED TO TORCHIA THAT ALL COMMENTS ON THE SUBJECT OF US MILITARY ASSISTANCE WOULD HAVE TO COME FROM WASHINGTON RATHER THAN THE EMBASSY. THE STORY HAD SUBSEQUENTLY APPEARED AND WAS ATTRIBUTED TO AN ETHIOPIAN SOURCE. I DID NOT KNOW OF COURSE WHO THE SOURCE HAD BEEN AND THERE WAS CLEARLY NO POSSIBILITY OF PERSUADING TORCHIA TO NAME HIS SOURCE. I SAID I DEEPLY REGRETTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN A LEAK AND THAT I WOULD AGAIN ADVISE ALL USG PERSONNEL CONCERNED IN CONFIDENTIAL

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ADDIS TO MAINTAIN COMPLETE SECRECY ON THE AMMUNITION RESUPPLY REQUEST.

6. IN THE COURSE OF THESE REMARKS I ASSERTED THAT THE SEQUENCE OF PUBLIC STATEMENTS HAD BEEN (1) THE AP STORY; (2) THE STATEMENT BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN; AND (3) THE ANNOUNCEMENT ON VOA. KIFLE ASSERTED THAT THE SEQUENCE HAD BEEN (1) THE STATEMENT ON THE VOICE OF AMERICA; (2) THE AP STORY; AND (3) THE STATEMENT

BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN. I WOULD LIKE TO RESTATE THE  
FACTS ON THIS SEQUENCE TO MOFA AMERICAN AFFAIRS CHIEF HAMID,  
WHO WAS PRESENT DURING THIS AFTERNOON'S DISCUSSION, AND REQUEST FOR  
THIS PURPOSE THAT THE DEPARTMENT SUPPLY ME WITH THE PRECISE  
TIMES AND DATES OF THESE EVENTS.  
WYMAN

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